S/PV.8304

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8304th meeting
Friday, 29 June 2018, 3.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Nebenzia	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alahmad
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Poland	Mr. Lewicki
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Clay
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Mine action

Report of the Secretary-General on a comprehensive approach to mine action (S/2018/623)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Mine action

Report of the Secretary-General on a comprehensive approach to mine action (S/2018/623)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/623, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on comprehensive approach to mine action.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zouev.

Mr. Zouev (*spoke in Russian*): A year ago, on 30 June 2017, the Security Council adopted resolution 2365 (2017), the first resolution on mine action (see S/PV.7992). At the same time, the Security Council acknowledged the threat created by explosive objects to civilians and peacekeepers, as well as the acute need to carry out mine action in order to mitigate the threat. With the framework of the Office for the Rule of Law and Security Institutions, the United Nations Mine Action Service, in coordination with bodies within the United Nations system as well as with entities outside the Organization, is implementing the resolution.

The report that we are discussing today (S/2018/623) contains a short overview of what we have achieved so far. It also describes the issues we are encountering as we carry out our mine action.

(*spoke in English*)

After years of decrease, casualty numbers from explosive hazards are on the rise again. Despite the clearance efforts of the United Nations, Member States and non-governmental organizations, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines recorded, in its latest annual report, over 8,500 casualties of mines, explosive remnants of war and victim-operated improvised explosive devices. Ongoing conflicts and the difficulty of access to contaminated areas during active combats are among the main causes of this unfortunate trend. The figure represents over twice as many victims as four years ago. Over 2,000 of those victims were killed, nearly a quarter of whom were children. Considering the difficulty of gathering data during active conflicts, it is likely that the actual number of casualties is much higher.

The clearance of landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices does more than just save lives. Mine action is a precondition for stabilization and peacebuilding — and, eventually, sustainable development — to take hold. Once explosive remnants of war are removed from critical infrastructure like hospitals, power plants and water-treatment facilities, rehabilitation and reconstruction of public services can begin.

The resulting opportunities for progress, in turn, increase the likelihood that peace can be sustained in the long term. Moreover, mine action helps prevent explosive material from being harvested for use by armed and terrorist groups, which makes mine action a vital element of the nexus between peace and security and development, and a cornerstone in preventing any relapse into future conflict.

The report before the Council today notes that mine action is critical to the safety, security and mobility of United Nations personnel. In 2017, 59 peacekeepers lost their lives through malicious acts involving the use of explosive devices, and 150 more were injured. Contexts like Mali and Somalia continue to be highly threatening environments for the safe conduct of Security Council mandates.

The Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative seeks to make our missions stronger and safer. We owe it to the personnel we deploy on the ground to provide them with the right training, knowledge and equipment to safely conduct the United Nations mandate. Raising awareness, training and building capacity to mitigate the threat posed by explosive weapons are critical aspects of this effort. Through their mine-action activities, peace operations also protect civilians and enable the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

In armed conflicts, improvised explosive devices have become the main driver of increased deaths and injuries among civilians and peacekeepers. Peace operations are more effective, and lives are saved, when the threat posed by explosive hazards is considered from the earliest stages of planning and programming.

In his Agenda for Disarmament, which was launched last month, the Secretary-General called for a whole-of-system approach to this increasingly deadly threat. Under the leadership of the United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations entities are working towards a more effective and integrated response. Troop-contributing countries, too, must step up their efforts to prepare peacekeepers for the threats they face in their deployments. The United Nations will continue to provide support to countries seeking to improve their national mine-action management. I greatly thank those Member States that have implemented measures to mitigate the risk to their citizens of explosive devices, including by acceding to or ratifying relevant international instruments.

(*spoke in French*)

Resolution 2365 (2017) has made mine action one of the main priorities for the Organization. As a vital element in the prevention of casualties and the maintenance of peace and security, it is precisely there — at the forefront of United Nations action — that mine action must remain. The increasing number of victims shows that we cannot afford to be complacent. On behalf of the Secretary-General, I urge Member States in a position to do so to provide sustainable, predictable and unearmarked funding to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action.

The annual review of mine action by the Security Council, based on a report on the implementation of the resolution, would continue to give due attention to the threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Mine Action Service of the Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions will be ready at any time to inform the Council on specific mine-action issues.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Zouev for his informative briefing. I suggest that he not stop at the three languages he just used and next time use at least four official languages of the United Nations.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make a statement.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will speak in only one of the official languages of the Organization.

Bolivia wishes to express its gratitude for the report presented by the Assistant Secretary-General for the Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Mr. Alexander Zouev (S/2018/623), and we also thank the President and the delegation of Russia for scheduling today's meeting.

Today marks one year since the adoption of resolution 2365 (2017) (see S/PV.7992), which, as the first Security Council resolution dealing with mine action issues, was a milestone. The report submitted by the Secretary-General in the framework of that resolution allows the members of the Security Council to take a comprehensive look at the threat that landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices pose to civilians during armed conflicts, and even many years after their conclusion. As an example, the report notes that, in Cambodia, despite the fact that the ceasefire was signed more than 25 years ago, 2017 was the first year in which there was a full month without any record of casualties due to landmines or unexploded ordnance.

Unfortunately, the number of victims of landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices continues to increase. In 2017, there were more than 8,600 victims, more than double the number in 2014. We must emphasize that the indiscriminate use of such devices disproportionately affects the civilian population, with frightening consequences, particularly for children, who are killed or maimed. This situation is exacerbated by the ongoing urbanization of conflicts.

Improvised explosive devices also have a negative impact on the performance of peacekeeping operations and pose an ongoing threat to the lives of their members and of humanitarian workers. By way of example, since the establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in 2013, the Mission has recorded more than 350 victims, 65 per cent of whom lost their lives due to improvised explosive devices. In addition to posing a threat to humanitarian workers, improvised explosive devices hinder the delivery of humanitarian assistance. They also limit the movement of internally displaced persons and restrict their return home.

Mine action is crucial to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, since programmes in those areas allow public services to be rebuilt, foster sustainable development and prevent weapons and explosive material from being used by armed groups and terrorist groups. For example, land is used for farming, children can return to school, and water and electricity can be restored only after an extensive clean-up operation. There is therefore an intrinsic link between mine action, security and development. It is for those reasons that we underscore the work conducted by the United Nations Mine Action Service in coordinating mine action in 17 countries, territories and peacekeeping missions and special political missions.

In the light of all this, mine action is key to protecting civilians, both during and after conflict. The implementation of resolution 2365 (2017) is therefore crucial, as it calls upon all parties to conflict to put an immediate and permanent end to the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices and protect the civilian population from the threats they pose. We also believe that it is necessary to continue including, where appropriate, the issue of mine action in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The issue of mine action should also be included in the earliest stages of mission planning, programming and operating concepts We also believe that mine action should be included, as needed, in the agendas of Security Council missions.

We also stress that a mine action component should be included in peacekeeping operations, special political missions and issues on the Security Council's agenda. For example, it should be recalled that improvised explosive devices must be removed in Iraq and Syria. The clean-up of areas contaminated with landmines is under way in Cyprus, Western Sahara and Abyei. Risk education programmes are being conducted in Somalia. The Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed in Colombia in 2016, recognizes the issue of demining as a precondition for post-conflict rural development. Following the exit of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, ammunition was destroyed, thereby enabling the civilian population to use areas formerly employed by those missions in discharging their duties.

Mine action should therefore continue to feature prominently on the Security Council's agenda. We underscore the recommendation of the Secretary-General, which encourages the Security Council to consider the issue through an annual report on the implementation of resolution 2365 (2017). To that end, in the weeks ahead, bearing in mind the input of today's meeting and the various statements made by delegations, my delegation will submit a request for an annual report on the topic. In addition to the request for an annual report, we believe it is important to delve deeper into the issue of mine action, given the Security Council's efforts in areas such as the protection of civilians, humanitarian action and the security of the members of peacekeeping operations, through the implementation of national mine action plans and the early inclusion of the issue of mine action in mission planning.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our call to all States party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction, known as the Ottawa Convention, to honour their obligations and unite efforts to ensure its full implementation. We call on all States that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to join this important instrument.

In conclusion, we echo the words of Secretary-General António Guterres who said that peace without mine action is incomplete peace.

Mr. Lewicki (Poland): Let me to start by thanking the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alexander Zouev, for his very informative and thorough briefing. Let me also express our appreciation to the personnel of the United Nations Mine Action Service for its daily work to save lives.

Poland welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on a comprehensive approach to mine action (S/2018/623), which is indeed a useful source of comprehensive information on the scale of the current threat posed by mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. It enables the Security Council to gain thorough insight into the situation of civilians exposed to mine risk, including children, women, humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers. We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that the key role of mine action is sustaining peace. We therefore believe it critical to incorporate possible mine action from the earliest stages of planning and programming cycles when a threat occurs. We share the Secretary-General's views on the link between actions on the peace and stability and sustainable development

agendas. Only by integrating those areas through joint action can solid and durable solutions be accomplished.

Poland would like to underscore the crucial importance of promoting risk education activities among the affected populations, including youth and children, as well as constant support for the victims. Education is the key solution to minimize the risk of suffering of thousands of affected civilians. Last year, the adoption of the first stand-alone resolution on mine action was a clear sign of the concerns we all share about the serious threat to civilians, including children, humanitarian and medical personnel, posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. Today we share that concern even more. The importance of resolution 2365 (2017) and its message must be emphasized. For Poland, as the European Union facilitator of a General Assembly resolution on mine action, the effective and coordinated engagement of the United Nations in that area is of utmost importance.

Regrettably, due to protracted active conflicts and fighting, there is an ever-increasing number of contaminated areas and the scale of a worldwide threat posed to the civilian population is very alarming. The number of casualties caused by mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices increased more than twofold in 2017, compared to 2014. That statistic is terrifying. Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen are among those most severely affected by contamination, not to mention eastern Ukraine, where, a few months after August 2017, more than twice as many civilians were killed by remaining explosives.

On a positive note, the joint and coherent efforts of national and international actors can lead to results. We saw that in Colombia, where considerable progress in mine action has been achieved. Last year, we celebrated two important events. The first was the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which aims to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. We are very glad that in 2017 the number of States party to the Convention increased to an impressive 164. The second event was the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Mine Action Service.

We would like to reiterate our full recognition for the important role of the United Nations Mine Action Service since 1997 in mitigating threats posed by mines and associated remnants of war. Since 2015, Poland has regularly supported the activities of the United Nations Mine Action Service by making annual budgetary donations. We intend to continue that support this year.

In conclusion, Poland would welcome further Security Council discussions on mine action. We believe that countries should continue the practice of yearly reporting on the issue, which would contribute to the enhancement of all activities aimed at mitigating threats posed by contamination.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and the important briefing by Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Alexander Zouev.

Peru is a country committed to the elimination of anti-personnel mines, in accordance with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — also known as the Ottawa Convention. We believe that taking action against those weapons, which are particularly cruel, insidious and indiscriminate, constitutes a moral and legal obligation of the international community, which is called on to contribute directly to help the Council shoulder its responsibilities relating to the protection of civilians and the maintenance of international peace and security. Accordingly, we believe that it is important for this organ continue to focus on developments concerning mine action, especially in peacekeeping operations whose work in humanitarian demining is essential to fostering transitions from conflict situations to sustaining peace.

Based on our own experience in the area, we can give a first-hand account of the new peace dynamics that demining has created. Our armed forces today enjoy an exemplary relationship of trust and cooperation with those of our brotherly Republic of Ecuador in conducting joint demining activities on the shared border. Demining activities, outreach and prevention, and reparations and assistance provided to the victims of mines that the Peruvian State provided while combatting terrorism during the last decades of the twentieth century, have created today a positive relationship between the State and those communities most exposed to the violence at that time, in addition to opportunities for development, reconciliation and

the return of displaced persons that was facilitated by demining.

On the other hand, the continued presence of those weapons constitutes a remnant of conflict running contrary to international humanitarian law and tends to prolong conflict, especially among those who are most vulnerable. We underscore the importance of the planning and programming of mine action in close cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, local authorities, victims, humanitarian workers, civil society and those members of the population who risk being affected.

We would also like to highlight the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the usefulness of the report of the Secretary-General on the issue (S/2018/623), in particular with regard to peacekeeping operations deployed through the Council's mandate. The cooperation of UNMAS with the various relevant United Nations system entities helps to develop capacities, common standards and synergies aimed at more effective, safe and efficient action on the ground. Furthermore, we believe that its work must go beyond the removal and the destruction of anti-personnel mines. In particular, we emphasize the need to support the establishment and strengthening of national capacities for demining, prevention and assistance to victims. Establishing a rapid response system to respond to anti-personnel mines wherever they might appear is also of particular importance.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight three points contained in the Secretary-General's report that we believe to be of major importance concerning peacekeeping operations deployed via the Council's mandate.

First, there is a need to provide missions with training, equipment and adequate technology and to facilitate the transfer of those capacities to the country affected. We commend the training that is being done. Secondly, there is a need to prevent and mitigate the destructive action of improvised explosive devices used by non-State actors, which today represent the greatest threat. We welcome the development of manuals to that end. Thirdly, it is advisable to increase women's participation in those activities, with a view to promoting prevention strategies and linking with civilian society more inclusively and effectively.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on a comprehensive approach to mine action (S/2018/623) and Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev for his briefing.

We note from the report of the Secretary-General that mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) continue to cause widespread and indiscriminate injuries to civilian populations in various parts of the world, in both conflict and post-office situations. Of particular concern to us is the severe humanitarian consequences, including the loss of life, widespread suffering and its impact on humanitarian assistance, as highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report. We also note that the use of mines and IEDs and explosive remnants of war continue to hinder and obstruct the work of humanitarian actors, thereby affecting humanitarian assistance.

We are alarmed by the impact of landmines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war on peacekeeping missions, particularly in the context of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the African Union Mission in Somalia. For instance, it is seriously concerning to note that, according to the Secretary-General's report, MINUSMA has experienced its highest fatality rate since 2014. Comprehensive action to address the impact of mines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war requires a three-fold approach.

First, ensuring the full compliance with international humanitarian law of all parties to an armed conflict in their choice of weapons, including by ensuring strict compliance with the principles of proportionality, as well as distinctions, remains central. Parties to an armed conflict should take every necessary measure to protect civilians from the effect of hostilities, particularly by refraining from using weapons that could lead to an indiscriminate attack against civilians, such as mines and IEDs.

Secondly, we recognize that explosive remnants of war continue to be a serious humanitarian concern with devastating short- and long-term consequences on civilian populations, humanitarian actors and peacekeepers deployed in post-conflict situations. It is therefore critical to take concrete measures to address existing cases of contamination. In that regard, we welcome the measures taken by the United Nations Mine Action Service to reduce the impact of landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs on peacekeepers.

That takes me to my third point, on the impact of landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs on peacekeepers and the role of peacekeeping missions in addressing those challenges. We recognize that troop-contributing countries need to take every necessary measure to better prepare their peacekeepers deployed in conflict and post-conflict situations to respond to threats posed by landmines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war, including in the context of asymmetrical warfare. Equally important is the need to provide peacekeepers with the necessary capacity and force enablers to respond to the challenges faced by the use of such weapons by providing them with the necessary training and capability to protect themselves and civilians, as well as humanitarian actors.

I would therefore like to underscore the need to provide peacekeeping missions that are deployed and faced with risks associated with explosive remnants of war and IEDs with the proper training and the necessary capabilities that are critical in addressing the threat posed by explosive devices to peacekeepers, as identified by the Secretary-General in his report. Furthermore, as pointed out in the report prepared by Lieutenant General (Retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, entitled "Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers", it is critical to fully equip such missions by providing them with appropriate mine-protected vehicles and specialized weapons ammunition and by including a small cell of military engineers who would supervise anti-IED planning or operation procedures. Concrete measures should also be taken to enhance the intelligence capabilities of such missions to detect IEDs.

As a follow-up of today's discussion, we encourage these issues to be taken up within the appropriate format. I would like to particularly welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General to mainstream mine action into relevant country-specific discussions and the planning and mandate of United Nations responses, as well as the inclusion of mine action into ceasefire and peace agreements, where feasible and appropriate. I would also like to lend my support to the proposal of the Secretary-General to consider the issue in the Council on an annual basis.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): As this is the last open meeting of the Council this month, I should like first to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the successful completion of your presidency of the Security Council. I would like to point out that you have been very skilful in steering our deliberations. I wish the Russian national team success in the FIFA World Cup, which has been so excellently organized in your country.

(*spoke in English*)

We thank the Russian presidency for bringing the issue of mines and explosives to the attention of the Security Council. We also express our appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Zouev for his interesting, informative and comprehensive update.

(*spoke in Russian*)

We wish Mr. Zouev every future success in pursuit of the laudable purposes of the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

The contamination of mines and explosives, remnants of war and conflicts affects civilian populations, United Nations operations and global peace and security. The alarming rate of conflicts utilizing explosive devices necessitates a more robust response in order to provide urgent humanitarian mine action assistance. We are also witness to the growing use of improvised explosive devices by terrorist groups against civilians, our peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel, who must be protected from such tragedies.

Resolution 2365 (2017), ably introduced by Bolivia in June 2017, is of vital importance and is the first of its kind as a stand-alone resolution on mine action. It is a sine qua non for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Secretary-General's new agenda for peace. Therefore, we welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/623) and encourage periodic updates on the status of efforts to address the hazards of mines and explosives, inter alia, in the form of annual briefings. Kazakhstan highly values the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and would like to make the following observations and recommendations.

It is important for all relevant stakeholders — Member States, United Nations regional and subregional organizations, and international partners — to streamline efforts to protect civilians and include mine action in their mandates and programmes. It is just as important to build national capacities through training and ensuring the availability of equipment by promoting effective partnerships at all levels. We urge the international community to support the multifaceted activities of UNMAS, an invaluable and efficient United

Nations entity for mitigating the devastation caused in conflict and post-conflict zones through mine action, mine clearance, rehabilitation and risk education. As a preventive measure, education about the risk, safety and identification of mines and improvised explosive devices is most essential at all levels and segments of society.

We welcome the work of UNMAS with female risk-education volunteers to spread lifesaving education to women, who play a critical role in instilling safe behaviour among their children and peers. Women and young people have proven to be great catalysts for change and action.

The high death toll among our peacekeepers due to landmines and improvised explosive devices dictates that ensuring their safety and security must be our priority. Consequently, it is essential to equip our peacekeepers and provide them with in-depth, comprehensive and appropriate training, both predeployment and during missions. We therefore welcome the fact that UNMAS has developed and is implementing a comprehensive framework to mitigate the threat of improvised explosive devices that has contributed to reducing the casualty rate. Member States should also support the mine action response of the United Nations through predictable, un-earmarked funding for the purposes of long-term planning and programming.

No discussion of mines would be complete without considering victims who must be given immediate medical attention, in addition to prostheses, long-term rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Reintegration should include vocational training and job opportunities to lead normal, productive lives.

Kazakhstan has considerable experience in mine clearance, having neutralized more than 4.5 million explosive devices in Iraq. My country has also developed and provided intensive specialized training to Iraqi security forces, thereby enhancing their capacity to counter the threat of mines and explosives. That, in turn, has also become an area of special expertise. In that connection, Kazakhstan has established and is constantly upgrading its national demining centre and its K9 centre.

Kazakhstan is engaged in improving existing legislation, enacting new laws and providing practical and technical support for the safe and proper storage of ammunition and mines, in strict adherence to established international regulations. We are also strengthening such initiatives regionally among our Central Asian neighbours in the region.

Lastly, we are committed to joining the multilateral effort, not only for the safety and security of civilians, but also to reinforce stability, to promote peace and to support the process of sustainable development.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Kazakhstan for the kind words addressed to our presidency and, obviously, for wishing our team success in the FIFA World Cup. Nonetheless, let us make sure that every game in the World Cup is crowned with success. May the strongest team win.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): I can only agree with you, Mr. President, on your last statement. But let me thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev for his useful briefing today, as always. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his informative and comprehensive report (S/2018/623), which we welcome.

I would also like to acknowledge Bolivia's spearheading efforts in advancing this agenda through resolution 2365 (2017)last year and their commitment to keeping the Security Council's attention on this important issue. As we said at the adoption of resolution 2365 (2017) one year ago (see S/PV.7992), the terrible legacy of landmines and explosive remnants of war on the communities where they are found cannot be overstated. We commend the United Nations for all of its work on all aspects of mine action.

Together with countless community and civil-society groups, results are being achieved. Casualties from landmines have decreased in recent years and that is worth highlighting. At the same time, there is no room for complacency, as the number of casualties from improvised explosive devices, on the other hand, has risen sharply. These are generally used in conflict and post-conflict areas, including by non-State actors.

Sweden fully shares the concerns expressed over the serious post-conflict humanitarian and peacebuilding problems caused by explosive remnants of war. We need to do more to minimize their occurrence, effects and risks. In that context, it is worth recalling the significance of mine clearance in further enhancing the possibilities for peacekeeping operations to fulfil their work according to their mandates.

There is a growing awareness within the mine-action sector that including a gender perspective in activities will result in mine action having a greater

and wider impact. Women are often more inclined to share information on threats, and women and children often subject to risk from remnants of war in their daily activities. We note with satisfaction that the programme staff of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is almost 50 per cent women.

All in all, Sweden has contributed over $100 million to mine action worldwide over the past decade. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency is a stand-by partner to UNMAS and the International Committee of the Red Cross, and conducts humanitarian operations, including humanitarian mine action worldwide.

Sweden believes in an approach to disarmament and international security that puts human beings at the centre of its policy. Sweden is a State party to all relevant conventions banning or regulating the use of mines, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions as well as the handling of explosive remnants of war. Sweden remains firmly committed to these Conventions and their full universalization, which is the most effective way to counter the risks associated with the use of such weapons.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. I want to thank the Bolivian delegation as well for calling the Security Council's attention to this important issue. Of course I want to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zouev for his briefing to us here today. We hope that today's discussion will highlight the importance of mitigating the threats posed by mines and other explosive hazards as well as underline the potential life-saving impact of addressing this issue effectively.

The United States urges other Member States to join us in a robust international partnership to reduce the impact of unexploded ordnance, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and mines on the vulnerable communities around the world. As many have mentioned here, the clearance of mines, IEDs and unexploded ordnance plays an essential role in reconstruction and stabilization in many regions of the world. We remove explosive hazards in order to protect civilians to ensure a secure environment for the providers of a range of follow-on assistance and to clear the lines of transportation and communication for commerce.

In the international realm, the United States is the Chair of the Mine Action Support Group for the next two years. We will strive to increase donor participation and commitment to this very important work.

Protecting civilians from these weapons is a prerequisite for achieving lasting peace and stability. Whether it is children on their way to school, business men and women conducting trade and commerce, farmers cultivating their fields or shepherds tending their flocks, civilians must be protected from the risk of abandoned landmines and unexploded ordnance. As long as these types of dangers persist, affected communities will not fully recover from the remnants of conflict.

The United States has been the world's largest single donor and financial supporter of humanitarian mine action, providing more than $2.9 billion in aid for conventional-weapons destruction in more than 100 countries since 1993. This includes clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnance. In fact, the United States is more committed to conventional-weapons-destruction assistance now than we ever have been. Our State Department provided $179.5 million in conventional weapons destruction assistance in 2016, and we project the final contribution for 2017 to be $266.5 million, which is an unprecedented single-year investment. This assistance is not focused solely on clearance of explosive hazards, such as landmines, IEDs and unexploded ordnance; rather, the conventional weapons destruction programme provides the United States with a broader framework, with the flexibility to assist States with munitions management.

Around the world, stockpiles of excess poorly secured or otherwise at-risk conventional weapons remain a serious challenge to peace and prosperity. Poorly secured munitions are illicitly diverted to terrorists, armed groups and other destabilizing actors, threatening the lives of our citizens and those of our partners. Deteriorating or mishandled stockpiles could threaten to devastate nearby population centres. They can also prevent the safe use of land, which can suppress economic development and prevent displaced persons from returning home.

These programmes do not merely seek to protect civilians from the threat of unexploded ordnance; they also provide a vehicle to prevent the spread of disease, stave off starvation and provide a sense of hope and confidence for populations afflicted by these threats, so that they might more actively engage their communities and participate in their economies. Rapid stabilization assistance, critical to promoting security and securing peace dividends in a post-conflict environment, cannot

take place until IEDs, unexploded ordnance and other conventional munitions are removed safely and securely.

In conclusion, in the light of the unfortunately high number of armed conflicts today, conventional-weapons-destruction assistance will continue to play a critical role in our efforts to build a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): We thank the Russian presidency for convening today's important meeting, which gives the Security Council the opportunity to assess, one year after its adoption, the level of implementation of resolution 2365 (2017) on landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. We also thank Mr. Alexander Zouev for his excellent briefing on the implementation of the resolution.

The remarkable progress made in recent years in mine action is to be welcomed and encouraged, as is the growing commitment of States to complying with mine-action standards. Indeed, 164 States are now parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. My country notes with satisfaction that some States have destroyed the remaining anti-personnel mines on their territories, thereby fulfilling their obligations under the Convention. My delegation also welcomes the inclusion of mine action at the heart of humanitarian action, peacebuilding and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It must be recognized that, despite the significant progress that has been made in this area, the common goal of achieving a mine-free world is far from being achieved and remains a major challenge for the international community. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/623), the phenomenon remains a persistent threat to international peace and security, particularly for civilian populations and humanitarian workers, but also for peacekeeping forces deployed in conflict zones. Long after the end of hostilities, these explosive devices continue to kill and maim, making it impossible for refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes or to give them any hope of a return to normal life or post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, despite the decrease in threats caused by mines and explosive remnants of war, new threats have emerged, such as improvised explosive devices, obsolete and poorly managed stockpiles of ammunition, and the circulation of small arms and light weapons.

In the wake of the crisis in my country, Côte d'Ivoire, despite not having experienced the use of anti-personnel mines, decided to destroy its stockpile of anti-personnel mines — a total of 1,803 mines — in accordance with its commitments under the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. The Ivorian Government has also decided to make the management and security of arms and ammunition stocks one of its priorities.

With the support of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and its Mine Action Service, Côte d'Ivoire has established weapons and ammunition storage sites that meet international standards, through the development of standards for the construction of weapons depots, the renovation of armouries and the construction of secure bunkers, in accordance with international standards. Similarly, a weapons-stockpile-management procedure manual and an ammunition-management guide have been developed to improve existing tools and systems. The authorities have also worked, in terms of capacity-building, on the technical training of persons in charge of depot management, and have set up a computerized database of weapons and ammunition. To date, Côte d'Ivoire can boast a marked and registered weapons rate of 95 per cent.

In the face of the worrying issue of mines and explosive remnants of war, Côte d'Ivoire calls for strengthened international cooperation among States with a view to eliminating the danger they pose to international peace and security. It encourages the implementation of international legal instruments related to mine action and urges ongoing collective efforts towards the universalization of such instruments. My delegation also believes that the elimination of the risks inherent in anti-personnel mines requires a holistic approach that involves both raising public awareness of the dangers posed by those devices and conducting the operations necessary to identify and remove them. That approach must also include victim assistance, weapons management, the destruction of arsenals, national capacity-building and the full implementation of Conventions prohibiting and regulating the use of anti-personnel mines.

My country also encourages States to implement programmes and policies on mine awareness, mine

clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance, based on the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the inclusion of the issue of mine action when developing mandates for peacekeeping operations, special political missions and humanitarian and development programmes. In that context, we appreciate the key role played by the United Nations, including its Mine Action Service, and reaffirm the need for partnerships and cooperation among regional organizations, such as the African Union and the United Nations.

Lastly, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the completion of the United Nations explosive ordnance disposal standards as an important step in adapting the response of the United Nations to the evolving mine threat.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that the struggle to eliminate the danger posed by mines and explosive remnants of war remains relevant to our shared efforts to promote peace and ensure development in the world. It is therefore important that the Security Council remain seized of the issue because of its implications for international peace and security and that the Secretary-General ensure that Council members are regularly informed of its progress.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Alexander Zouev on his excellent briefing on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/623), which is of critical importance, and by wishing him every success in his work as Head of the United Nations Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions. We would also like to congratulate the members of the Council, united in our strong commitment to contributing actively and positively to the results and contributions that today's meeting hopes to achieve.

My brief statement on mine action focuses on the following reflections and observations.

First, landmines were created before the twentieth century, but their use did not become widespread among the many groups and armed forces until the Second World War. They were widely used in international and internal conflicts alike. Mines remain an ongoing threat to civilian populations even long after the cessation of hostilities. Similarly, unexploded ordnance — bombs, howitzers or grenades — and other ammunition that did not explode when it was employed continue to wreak havoc in post-conflict communities around the world and are likely to be even more numerous.

Secondly, the threat of the mines goes far beyond killing, maiming and injuring thousands of people every year, whether or not there is a conflict.

Thirdly, such weapons continue to have social, prolonged and, in many cases, serious economic and environmental consequences.

Fourthly, from 2002 to June 2003, thousands of landmine casualties were recorded in 65 countries, the majority of which — 41 — were at peace, not at war.

Fifthly, during a civil war in 1864, General William T. Sherman used words that subsequently became famous to describe the use of mines. Due to the brutality of their effects, he stated that their use was "not an act of war, but a homicide".

The international community must take into account the fact that in 1995 the United Nations declared that mines were "one of the most widespread, lethal and long-lasting forms of pollution we have yet encountered". In a conflict, it is impossible to accurately estimate the number of unexploded mines and ammunition. The threat posed by unexploded ordnance is therefore now a serious concern for the international community because of the humanitarian consequences, in particular of anti-personnel mines, and such consequences must be properly assessed.

Given that bleak backdrop, we would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to our Bolivian colleagues for their valuable contribution in this field. Just a year ago, on its own initiative, the Council adopted resolution 2365 (2017), which, to our surprise, was the first international legal text dedicated to condemning and demanding collective and coordinated action against the indiscriminate use of such cowardly weapons.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea urges States, by mandate of the Security Council, to adopt the necessary regulatory mechanisms governing the use, possession and illegal trafficking of mines and other improvised explosive devices. It is essential to adopt joint strategies to ensure greater control and security at airports, ports, border posts and crossing points, roads and in communications among States. The goal is to better detect and confiscate improvised explosive devices and related materials in an effort to build a world that is safer, fairer, more peaceful, prosperous and, above all, respectful of societies so as to continue to ensure peaceful coexistence among peoples.

In conclusion, I would like to welcome and support the recommendations contained in a recent report of the Secretary-General, in which he requests a formal follow-up to the issue, with periodic reports on the status of the implementation of relevant resolutions. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea will seek to ensure that the issue is included on the Security Council's agenda.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First, let me begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Zouev for his excellent briefing and leadership on the issue at hand. We commend you, Mr. President, on Russia's able presidency of the Security Council in June. Let me also thank Ambassador Llorentty Solíz of Bolivia for requesting today's meeting.

I will address three points: first, the threat of landmines; secondly, the United Nations and mine action; and thirdly, the role of the Security Council.

First, landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices pose a significant threat to the safety of civilians, parents and children alike, peacekeepers and humanitarian aid workers during conflict and long after it ends. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/623) highlights that it is truly a global concern. Afghanistan, Libya, Ukraine, Iraq and Yemen are among the most affected countries. It demonstrates the relevance of mine action for the Council's agenda. In places like Mosul, Iraq, urgent humanitarian action is hindered, which means that civilians cannot return to their homes. Indeed, the increased use of those types of explosives in urban and residential areas is alarming. Let us not forget that children are the leading victims of explosive remnants of war. That confers upon us a huge responsibilty.

That brings me to my second point — the United Nations and mine action. We commend the role of the United Nations Mine Action Service under the able leadership of Agnès Marcaillou. We see a clear connection between mine action and peacekeeping. We actively support the United Nations in modernizing peace operations through the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping process, which, as we all know, the Secretary-General launched here in the Council in March (see S/PV.8218). In that context, we highly favour the further integration of mine action into United Nations peacekeeping, and we look forward to working closely with Côte d'Ivoire in the coming months in that process.

At the same time, humanitarian space must be protected, and my country tries to help in that regard. We are sixth on the list of worldwide donors in humanitarian mine action. We are contributing €3 million of unearmarked funding to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund and an additional €45 million to humanitarian demining projects for the current four-year period. We cooperate in particular with non-governmental organizations. We commend them for their work in sometimes very dangerous circumstances. Let me mention them: the Mines Advisory Group, the HALO Trust and DanChurchAid. That is part of our multi-annual funding and multi-stakeholder collaboration approach, and we hope that other countries will approach mine action in a similar way.

We welcome recent accessions to the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — also known as the Ottawa Convention — the Convention on Cluster Munitions and other instruments, but frankly speaking we continue to have a long way to go before all of them are universal. We therefore hope to see additional accessions to all the relevant instruments by this time next year.

That brings me to my third point — the role of the Security Council. We believe that it is important that the Council continue to consider mine action, which can be done both in country-specific debates and through mainstreaming mine action in peacekeeping mandates. Therefore, we support the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his report. That includes urging troop-contributing countries to better prepare peacekeepers for the threats that they will face and including mine action in peace agreements and ceasefires. We are in favour of holding an annual debate on that subject in the Council. One year after the adoption of resolution 2365 (2017), the Council cannot become complacent.

In conclusion, mine action really is at the nexus of security, conflict resolution and development. Its ripple effects can carry a long way if we go about it in the right way. There is a clear humanitarian imperative. Mine action enables farmers to grow crops, parents to buy food for their children and their children to go to school.

Mr. Clay (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Zouev for his briefing, and through

him I would like to extend the United Kingdom's appreciation for all the work carried out by United Nations staff working on mine action, especially in the United Nations Mine Action Service.

I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2018/623) on the implementation of resolution 2365 (2017). The United Kingdom reiterates its support for the resolution, in which, for the first time, the Council calls for action against the lasting threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to civilians and peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel. Twenty years after the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, landmines remain a major threat. As discussed in the Secretary-General's report, landmines continue to kill and maim indiscriminately. It is civilians, and all too often children, who are the victims of those brutal weapons. Although a great deal has been done and achieved to rid the world of those horrific weapons, it is clear that more remains to be done.

The United Kingdom fully agrees that instruments of international law provide protection against the proliferation of explosive weapons. We remain fully committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which we chaired in 2017, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We call on all States not already party to those conventions to accede to those key international disarmament initiatives without delay. It is only when we stop producing those atrocious weapons, that people will stop being killed by them.

The United Kingdom will continue to uphold its own commitments under the Convention. We are working to clear landmines in the Falkland Islands, the only part of our territory that is contaminated with landmines. We are also proud to offer substantial international assistance. Last year, we tripled our funding for mine action and will spend $130 million over three years to tackle the humanitarian and development impact of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. That support is making 150 square kilometres of land safe, which will help 800,000 people and ensure that, every year, over 100,000 people — especially children — fully understand the dangers posed by landmines and how to avoid them.

We welcome the significant role played by the United Nations, in particular its focus on strengthening national capacity and the importance of partnerships. In support of that, we provide funding to the Voluntary Trust Fund of the United Nations Mine Action Service, and, through the United Kingdom military's Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Munitions and Search Training Regiment, have supported the United Nations development of improvised explosive device disposal standards. We welcome the completion of those standards and recognize the role that they will play in ensuring the safety of United Nations personnel who take part in demining activity. As identified in the Secretary-General's report, there is an appalling trend of increased use of improvised explosive devices by non-State actors. The United Kingdom supports Resolution 2370, (2017), which restricts terrorist actors' access to weapons. We call for additional stringent national measures to deny terrorists ready access to weapons and explosive precursors. We also support General Assembly resolution 71/72, on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, the second of its kind.

International cooperation is vital to tackling the criminal and terrorist networks facilitating and using IEDs. The United Kingdom is actively engaged in facilitating discussions among the international community on the topic of IEDs and mine action. The conference that we hosted in May considered the challenges of realizing a mine-free world and looked at how we could overcome them. Much of the remaining clearance challenge stems from recent indiscriminate contamination by mines and IEDs. It is vital that we continue to assess the challenges ahead and collaboratively consider the means to meet such challenges. We must augment our efforts where we can so that we can collectively tackle the scourge of landmines.

Mr. Alahmad (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation for the valuable briefing by Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

We are discussing an extremely important topic today on the Security Council's agenda, as the issue of mines, explosive ordnance and improvised explosive devices is directly linked to the United Nations goal to maintain peace and security in armed conflict and dispute zones. Regrettably, since the United Nations began monitoring civilian casualties caused by such explosives and mines in 1999, statistics have shown an

increase in the number of civilian casualties resulting from the remnants of war and mines. It is truly saddening that children comprise the largest category of civilian victims of the remnants of war.

Our discussion today on mine action and warnings concerning their negative impact on civilians, especially in the aftermath of war, is of particular importance to the State of Kuwait because of its bitter experience following the liberation of the country from the Iraqi occupation, which in its wake left behind landmines throughout its territory, including on beaches and in vast expanses of desert, that have killed many civilians.

We commend all United Nations efforts to maintain peace and security among all conflicting parties, which is achieved through peacekeeping operations and the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, as well as efforts to arrive at settlements and confidence-building measures and limiting the deadly effects of landmines on the lives of civilians following conflicts.

Allow me in this regard to commend the heroic actions taken by more than 100,000 men and women in peacekeeping operations in different conflict zones, risking their lives in order to maintain and protect the lives of others, especially civilians, in extremely dangerous and complicated environments. We call for improving the preparation and performance of peacekeepers, who are operating in areas at high risk of explosives, so that they are better able to perform their duties and save their lives.

I would like to define three important measures that would alleviate the impact of landmines on civilians: first, to stop violence and conflict between armed groups; secondly, to facilitate restoring public services in post-conflict areas and promote the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals for establishing peaceful and conflict-free societies; and thirdly, to issue national laws which prohibit the possession of weapons and explosive materials.

We welcome measures to enhance partnership and cooperation between the United Nations and other States at the national and international levels in the field of mine action. Moreover, we commend the partnership established between the United Nations and the African Union Commission to manage mine action. I would also note the efforts made by the United Nations, in cooperation with the Government of Iraq, through joint programmes aimed at screening and clearing areas of mines in the liberated areas of Iraq. We also welcome the work being done between the United Nations and the Governments of Lebanon, Libya, Somalia and other Governments of Member States.

We condemn the use of landmines by the Houthis in Yemen. These landmines are being placed randomly, thereby endangering the lives of civilians, in clear violation of international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, I note that resolution 2365 (2017), which the Security Council adopted last year, represents a positive development in the efforts of the United Nations to combat the danger of landmines, explosives and improvised explosive devices remnants of war. I reaffirm that such efforts to stop the use of landmines will save the lives of many civilians and make an important contribution to achieving the desired security and peace. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to consider mine action on an annual basis in the Council.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Zouev for his briefing.

In recent years, thanks to the joint efforts of the international community, progress has been made in international mine action. The harrowing problems of landmines have been mitigated in some countries and regions. Last year, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2365 (2017), fully demonstrating the priority that the international community attaches to mine action.

China welcomes the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on a comprehensive approach to mine action (S/2018/623). We also commend the efforts of the United Nations to address the threat of landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and encourage the United Nations to continue to play a major role in that regard. We believe that the Organization's efforts in this area are of great importance to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and are also in line with the concept of a community of shared future for mankind that China has been advocating.

At present, dozens of countries throughout the world are facing the threat of landmines and other explosives. In certain countries and regions, local wars and armed conflicts have led to more suffering

caused by landmines, while IEDs have already become a tool for terrorists and extremists to spread terror and violence in recent years. Strengthening international assistance and cooperation in mine action will help to greatly reduce the threat posed by landmines and other explosives to civilian lives and property, safeguard peacekeeping missions and realize the SDGs.

China maintains that to strengthen international assistance and cooperation in mine action and to effectively mitigate humanitarian concerns related to landmines and other explosives, the international community should focus on the following four points. First, it is important to respect the differences among countries with regard to security environments and military strength by addressing the humanitarian concerns and legitimate national military and security needs in a balanced fashion. Secondly, it is imperative to fully take into consideration the national conditions and needs of landmine-affected countries and to provide them with assistance and cooperation based on the realities on the ground. Thirdly, we must build the capacities of mine-affected countries in order to enable them to transition from reliance on external assistance to self-reliance, for the most part. Fourthly, it is crucial to focus on improving the practical results of demining assistance and cooperation and to continue to find new avenues for international cooperation.

China has always paid great attention to the humanitarian concerns associated with landmines. As a past victim, we feel very strongly about the hardships of mine-affected countries. China has actively supported international legal instruments, including the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), as well as resolution 2365 (2017). China is a high contracting party to the CCW and its five Additional Protocols. We faithfully fulfil our obligations under those instruments.

China has also actively participated as an observer in the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. China is firmly committed to the cause of international humanitarian demining assistance. China has offered demining assistance to more than 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America by providing demining equipment and personnel training.

In September 2015, at the seventieth session of the General Assembly, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced at the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping that China would launch 10 demining assistance programmes within the next five years. All of those programmes have been implemented ahead of schedule. As we speak, China is hosting a humanitarian demining training workshop for Laos in Nanjing, China. In the second half of the year, we plan to train 80 Cambodian deminers in China. We will also donate humanitarian demining supplies to those two countries.

China attaches great importance to humanitarian concerns arising from the abuse of IEDs by non-State actors. We support efforts to find a reasonable and viable solution within the CCW framework. China strictly administers the production, sales, procurement, import and export, storage and transport of explosives through a series of laws and regulations. As an active participant in the development of the United Nations IED-disposal standards, China, with the assistance of the United Nations Mine Action Service, has co-chaired the Working Group with Belgium and has drafted some of its important chapters. We hope that the standards will help United Nations peacekeeping operations to improve their skills and ability to dispose of IEDs and that it will be used voluntarily by the international community as a reference.

As always, China stands ready to fulfil its international obligations and provide assistance to the best of its ability as people in mine-affected countries and regions strive to rebuild their homes. We join the international community in making our contribution to addressing the humanitarian concerns arising from landmines and other explosive devices.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev for his briefing. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting one year after the adoption of resolution 2365 (2017) on an important topic that deserves our attention and mobilization.

Unfortunately, my first comment is to recall that the state of affairs is indisputable. Anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and cluster munitions remain a major threat to our security. To that, we must add the challenge of improvised explosive device

(IEDs), which are most frequently used by terrorists, and the very nature of the IEDs. The fact that they are homemade, using components that are freely available, makes this issue all the more difficult to address in international bodies. Since we renewed the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) only yesterday (see S/PV.8298), I am thinking specifically of the case of Mali, where the Blue Helmets have already paid a heavy price. I am also thinking of the Rohingya woman amputee who was the victim of an anti-personnel mine whom we met during the Council's visit to Bangladesh and Burma, and of the photos of shredded limbs and bodies that we were shown there. What these weapons have in common is that they blindly mow down adults and children, civilians and military, without distinction. They are actually one of the leading causes of civilian casualties in conflict and post-conflict areas, from Afghanistan to Colombia. That speaks to the breadth of this threat and the risks it brings nowadays, and France considers it a serious cause for concern that should continue to force us to act with more determination than ever.

Considering how serious these challenges are, in my second point I would like to echo the Secretary-General's call for strengthening our action to save lives. Needless to say, our action should be adapted each specific situation, because we are dealing with a complex range of weapons, with major consequences both for stabilization in general and post-conflict reconstruction, and they require targeted measures, which the international community should take action on on two levels.

First, we have to supply the means needed to work with the stakeholders on the ground, whether they are troops or specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to fight this threat. They need operational means adapted to particularly tricky security conditions. In that regard, France would like to commend the outstanding work being done by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), in cooperation with other United Nations agencies. UNMAS, which is headed by my compatriot Agnès Marcaillou, is putting its unparalleled know-how at the service of the world's most vulnerable populations with a great deal of courage. I want to express our special gratitude to the responders on the front lines of this effort, the civilian and military deminers, for their tireless devotion at the risk of their own lives. It is their action that creates the security conditions that enable Blue Helmets to deploy, humanitarian personnel to reach the people in need and the people themselves to resume normal life.

It is also essential to assist States and their specialized agencies through various training and awareness-raising activities. The countries exposed to these threats must be able to develop their own expertise so that they are no longer dependent on assistance locally from foreign and international teams. Among other things, we should focus on educating local populations about the risks.

My third point has to do with France's efforts to combat the problem of mines. We focus particularly on backing efforts to reform the security apparatus of a number of partner States, train national bodies and support partners deployed in the countries concerned. Following the example of Handicap International, these NGOs are doing an admirable job. With a view to achieving stabilization, France is supporting specialized training in a mainly humanitarian context in a number of countries emerging from crisis. In close partnership with the relevant stakeholders, we are supporting demining programmes, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, for example through such regional initiatives as the Humanitarian Demining Training Centre in Benin.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that it is only through united action and better cooperation that we will succeed in effectively combating the threat posed by mines. It is our responsibility to intensify our efforts and strengthen their coherence in order to minimize the bleeding that these deadly devices cause. The complexity of the threat demands that multiple actors come up with a coordinated response based on the diverse kinds of expertise and resources of each. The example of the Mine Action Support Group should inspire us in that regard. Increasing our cooperation also means working to universalize and fully implement the legal tools at our disposal, especially the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which is our basic instrument in the fight against anti-personnel mines, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Many countries share the objectives of these Conventions even if they are not yet signatories to them, and France encourages all who have not yet done so to accede to them. Together with the European Union, we stand ready to give them concrete support in that process.

I would like to end by congratulating Russia for its effective presidency of the Security Council this month.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev for his substantive briefing. We believe it is very important to be kept regularly informed by the Secretary-General about the United Nations bodies specializing in mine action, in accordance with resolution 2365 (2017), and we see his report on a comprehensive approach to such action (S/2018/623) as one of the steps being taken to implement the disarmament agenda. We note his efforts to maintain a neutral, impartial and balanced approach in the report that uses the facts to reflect the major measures taken under United Nations auspices in 2017 in the area of demining and clearing land of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

However, among the report's significant trends, there is a notable overemphasis on the humanitarian risks associated with the threat of mines in Syria and eastern Ukraine. We were also sorry to see that there was no reflection in the report of Russia's mine action efforts. As one of the most active participants in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Russia makes a significant contribution to international efforts to reduce the threat of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs based on implementing resolution 2365 (2017), on which we present annual national reports. In 2016 and 2017 a mine-clearance unit from the Russian Armed Forces' International Mine Action Centre conducted four humanitarian demining operations in Syria, two in Palmyra's historic architectural complex and in the residential part of the city, and two in Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor, clearing a total of 6,500 hectares of land, 1,500 kilometres of roads and more than 17,000 buildings. They detected and rendered harmless 105,000 explosive remnants of war, including more than 30,000 homemade explosive devices. The Russian Armed Forces' systematic efforts to eliminate the threat of IEDs in Syria represents our practical contribution to implementing the related General Assembly resolution 72/36.

Russia actively promotes technical, consultative and operational capacity-building for mine clearance. At our International Mine Action Centre, we train specialists in the areas of mine clearance, the detection and neutralization of IEDs, the operation of mobile robotic complexes, and mine detection services. The Centre is also open to exchanging professional experience with all interested parties. In 2017, for instance, it trained 207 Russian officers and 36 foreign military personnel. The opening at the end of 2016 of a branch of the Centre in Aleppo was an important step that has already put more than 1,000 demining specialists for the Syrian Armed Forces through sapper school. I would like to point out that the Syrian sappers trained at the Russian Centre have been supplied with modern technical detection and protective equipment for explosive objects and are already taking part in demining parts of eastern Ghouta, the southern suburbs of Damascus, eastern Qalamoun and Homs.

The Russian Federation's efforts are crucial to restoring the infrastructure necessary for returning refugees and temporarily displaced persons to their homes. Notably, that approach is recognized in the Secretary-General's report. However, while where the situations in Darfur and Iraq are concerned it describes on the specific work being done, the report on Syria is limited to mentioning the task to be done and then moves immediately to the difficulty of access. Russia's mine action efforts show clearly that the problems have nothing to do with access. In our view, the involvement of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in the efforts in Syria has been unjustifiably long drawn out. And the problem is not just to do with an unresolved issue with the Damascus Office and the Head of UNMAS, but also with something we are all too familiar with, the politicization of humanitarian issues by potential donors who do not want to contribute to normalizing life in Syria.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the Russian Federation gives significant attention to the development of international cooperation on mine clearance. In October 2017 and May 2018, engineers from the Russian Armed Forces held two international conferences on humanitarian demining in which delegations from 24 countries took part. We are continuing our close interaction with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. Russian experts took part in efforts organized by the United Nations Mine Action Service to prepare international standards for countering IEDs.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Zouev.

Mr. Zouev (*spoke in Spanish*): We have taken detailed notes on the important comments and recommendations that Council members have made today, and we will be implementing them in our mine action efforts in future. We will also definitely take note of the President's recommendation to use more of the official languages of the United Nations, and more than the three that I have used in my briefing today. In that regard I would like to point out that last June, during Bolivia's presidency, when I had the honour of representing the Secretary-General at the meeting (see S/PV.7992) at which the Council adopted its historic resolution 2365 (2017), I used four of the official languages, including Spanish, which, unfortunately, is not my best.

The President: I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zouev for his vast polyglot skills. We are looking forward to having him in the Council more often. There are still two more languages that he should be able to master, and next time we will hear his briefing in all the official languages of the United Nations.

(*spoke in Russian*)

Since this is the last meeting of the Security Council for the month of June — at least I hope it is — before adjourning it, on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives, their mission staffs and the secretariat of the Council for all the support that they have given us, and also for the kind words I have heard today for our presidency. It really was a busy month, in which we managed to reach a consensus on a number of important issues within our remit. We could not have achieved those results alone or without the hard work, support and constructive contribution of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, as well as all the conference staff, the interpreters and translators, the verbatim reporting service and the security staff, for which I want to thank them sincerely.

Our presidency is coming to an end and I am sure that the members of the Council will support me in wishing the Swedish delegation luck in July. I hope this official football, which has been our guiding light for half of our presidency, will bring luck to the Swedish delegation and will also remain on the table, according to the agreement reached with the Swedish delegation, until the end of the FIFA World Cup. We wish the delegation of Sweden success with the presidency of the Security Council and the Swedish national team success on the World Cup football field, and many thanks to all.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.